

FA Cup

City duck broken

Football

AFP, London

Manchester City's 14-match winless run finally came to an end on Wednesday as Kevin Keegan's side produced a late, late show against Leicester to reach the fourth round of the FA Cup.

A Nicolas Anelka strike in the last minute of regulation time followed by a rare goal from Jon Macken deep into stoppage time saw City secure a 3-1 replay win at the Walkers Stadium to secure a fourth round home tie against Tottenham in a re-run of the 1981 final.

Chelsea also made it into the fourth round, knocking four goals past first division Watford at Stamford Bridge.

Claudio Ranieri's side advance to a clash with non-league side Scarborough, who overcame third division Southend 1-0 thanks to a goal from their leading scorer Mark Quayle seven minutes from the end of their replay.

"It is a fantastic result for us and it gives us our own Cup final," Quayle said after earning his side an estimated 500,000-pound (900,000-dollar) payday.

"Tonight was the semi, with the carrot of Chelsea at home.

"We knew we had done well to bring revenue into the club but players don't think about that -- tonight was the highlight of a lot of the players' careers."

Antoine Sibierski put City on track to end their miserable run when he dived to head Trevor Sinclair's cross past Ian Walker after only 11 minutes.

But after Anelka was twice denied by the Leicester keeper, City's promising start gave way to an extremely hesitant second half display. An equaliser always looked on the cards and duly arrived when Les Ferdinand drove a 73rd minute free-kick through the City wall and into the net with the help of a deflection off Joey Barton's back-side.

Leicester looked the more likely winners at that point but they were made to pay for a mix-up between their centreback Frank Sinclair and Walker.

As the defender attempted to usher the ball back to his goalkeeper, Anelka was able to nip in between them and clip the ball into the net.

Italian Cup Last gasp Milan

AFP, Rome

Massimo Ambrosini scored a dramatic 90th minute winner to give holders AC Milan a 2-1 victory over Roma in the first leg of their Italian Cup quarter-final at the San Siro on Wednesday.

The 26-year-old Italy international pounced from close range after Roma goalkeeper Carlo Zotti had failed to clear Serginho's low left-wing cross.

Milan will take a slender advantage into next week's second leg in Rome.

Danish striker Jon Dahl Tomasson had put Milan in front six minutes before half time with a controversial goal that was hotly disputed by the Roma players, who thought Marco Borriello was standing in an offside position when the ball was played forward by Dario Simic.

The referee however judged that Borriello was not interfering with play and the goal stood.

Roma, who were defeated by Milan in last season's final, fought back in the second half and scored what could prove to be a crucial away goal 12 minutes from time when John Carew volleyed home from eight yards.

Earlier Wednesday, Lazio put themselves in a strong position to qualify for the last four after defeating crisis club Parma 2-0 at the Olympic stadium.

Parma, whose future hangs in the balance following the collapse of parent company Parmalat, fell behind 10 minutes before half time when Roberto Muzzi met Fabio Liverani's cross with a looping header which sailed past reserve goalkeeper Vincenzo Sicignano.

Lazio increased their advantage on the hour through Dejan Stankovic, strongly linked with a move to Inter Milan in the January transfer window.

This time Muzzi turned provider, setting up the Serbian midfielder whose angled drive found the bottom corner.

On Thursday, Italian league champions Juventus visit Perugia in the last remaining first leg tie.

On Tuesday, Inter Milan, who last won the cup in 1982, scraped a 0-0 draw away to Udinese.



Chelsea's Dutch international striker Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink (C) watches his attempt going in beating Watford's goalkeeper Lenny Pidgeley (R) at Stamford Bridge in London on January 14.

There was no way back for Leicester and an unmarked Macken rubbed salt into their wounds by adding a third with more than two minutes of added-time gone.

Anelka celebrated his goal by ripping off his shirt to reveal a vest on which he had written "David Seaman, we love you," in tribute to City's former England goalkeeper, who announced his retirement on Tuesday.

The French striker was delighted City's miserable run had finally been ended. "It was good for the team, the manager and for everyone who was behind us.

"We knew it would be difficult and we had to be a unit. We were and that is why we won."

Chelsea meanwhile reaped the benefits of a return to form by their strikers -- perhaps spurred on by rumours linking the club with a transfer window move for Louis Saha, Christian Vieri or David Trezeguet.

Romanian international Adrian Mutu scored twice, while Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink and Eidur Gudjohnsen notched one apiece as Watford were outclassed.

There was an added bonus for Blues fans with Damien Duff returning from injury as a second half substitute. The Irish winger marked his comeback appearance by setting up Gudjohnsen for Chelsea's fourth and final goal.

Mutu had gone 13 games without scoring before he crowned his drought-ending goal at Leicester last weekend with two more at Stamford Bridge.

"This is a goalscorer's life," opined Ranieri. "You try to do everything well and you don't score. Now Mutu can play with a little more confidence. I think the link between Hasselbaink and Gudjohnsen is a little better, because they have been playing together since 2000. Mutu has only been here since August. But he can do it."

Watford started brightly and won a succession of corners, but Mutu's fortunate finish from close range set the Blues on their way.

Chelsea were playing keep-ball in the Hornets' half when England's Frank Lampard came storming forward and thumped a shot towards Lenny Pidgeley, the Chelsea goalkeeper on loan at

Watford. The youngster made a good save but when he spilled the ball, Neil Ardley inadvertently knocked it forward to Mutu.

The linesman initially ruled offside, much to Mutu's disgust, but the referee correctly awarded the goal.

Chelsea doubled their advantage three minutes later when William Gallas picked out Hasselbaink charging into the box with a long ball out of defence.

The Dutch hitman brought the ball down perfectly with his first touch before despatching it across Pidgeley with his second.

Just two minutes later, Mutu completed his double when he pulled the ball down in the box before turning marker Neil Cox to bend a smart finish low inside Pidgeley's left hand upright.

Gudjohnsen rounded off the night with a delightful first-time curler into the top corner with five minutes to go. Fellow substitute Duff played the Icelandic striker through in plenty of space to pick his spot.

Blues going to Scarborough fair

AFP, London

Struggling non-league side Scarborough have earned themselves a fourth round FA Cup clash with Chelsea and an estimated 500,000-pound payday after squeezing past third division Southend on Wednesday.

The Seadogs, as the side from the northeastern English fishing port are known, edged the third round replay thanks to a close range strike from their leading scorer Mark Quayle seven minutes from time.

The win sets up a clash that perfectly embodies the romance of football's oldest tournament.

Scarborough are currently eighth from bottom of the Nationwide Conference, the fifth tier in English professional football and a world apart from the millionaire lifestyles of Chelsea's superstars.

Their Cup displays so far have however belied their lowly status. On their way to the third round they claimed the scalps of two league sides, Doncaster and Port Vale and Wednesday night's hero Quayle had no doubt they deserved their win over Southend, despite a nervy finish to the match.

"I actually think we played better, more controlled football in the first leg, perhaps the atmosphere got to us a bit," Quayle said.

"But it is a fantastic result for us and it gives us our own Cup final. Tonight was the semi, with the carrot of Chelsea at home.

"We knew we had done well to bring revenue into the club but players don't think about that -- tonight was the highlight of a lot of the players' careers."

Chelsea's Italian manager Claudio Ranieri admitted the tie would be his first visit to Scarborough.

"I have never been there. I know it's a nice place with a good beach. Not for me, maybe for my English players, I'm used to going to warm places!"

"I understand maybe John Terry and Frank Lampard like this weather.

"I'm happy to go there because the FA Cup is wonderful for this reason. I'm sure there will be a very good party, but of course, on the pitch it will be no party but a very big battle. That is for sure."

James new City goalie

AFP, Manchester

England goalkeeper David James will make his Manchester City debut against Blackburn on Saturday after completing his move from West Ham, the Premiership club announced on Wednesday.

James, 33, put pen to paper on a two-and-a-half year deal after passing a medical less than 24 hours after the club had agreed a fee -- thought to be around two million pounds (2.5 million dollars) -- with his former employers.

City's swoop for James came after a shoulder injury precipitated an unexpected announcement by his England predecessor David Seaman that he was retiring immediately at the age of 40.

Heskey moving to Boro?

AFP, London

Liverpool and England striker Emile Heskey is holding transfer talks with Middlesbrough, Sky News reported on Wednesday.

Heskey has admitted he would consider his future at Anfield if he was not selected regularly for the first team.

The Liverpool Echo said earlier that Liverpool would be tempted to cash in on Heskey, whose contract expires in 18 months, and would accept a bid of around six million pounds (11 million dollars).

However with France international striker Djibril Cisse not expected to join Liverpool until the end of the season, and Michael Owen having an injury-plagued campaign, Liverpool may be reluctant to allow Heskey to leave at the present time.

Naughty Vieri

AFP, London

Inter Milan striker Christian Vieri is to be disciplined by the Serie A club after refusing to play in an Italian Cup match.

Vieri was called up by coach Alberto Zaccheroni for Tuesday's quarter-final first leg away to Udinese but refused to travel, saying he wanted to work on his fitness at the club's training ground.

The 30-year-old Italy international, who nearly left in the summer to join big-spending English Premiership club Chelsea, had a two hour meeting with the club's directors on Wednesday and is expected to be fined for his actions.

Vieri said he would take his punishment on the chin.

"I spoke at length with the directors and will accept whatever decision the club see fit to take," he said.

Spanish Kings Cup

Alaves cause a stir

Football

REUTERS, Madrid

Alaves struck late to claim a 1-1 draw at Valladolid on Wednesday and become the only second division side to make it through to the quarter-finals of the King's Cup.

After a goalless draw in the first leg, first division Valladolid took the lead through Francisco Sousa after 14 minutes.

That goal looked set to take them into the last eight but Mauricio Astudillo headed in a Pablo cross seven minutes from time to put promotion-chasing Alaves through and provide the only upset of the third-round stage.

Barcelona just managed to avoid a second surprise as goals from Andres Iniesta, Javier Saviola and Ronaldo gave them a 3-1 win over second division Levante at the

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Nou Camp and a 3-2 aggregate victory.

Real Madrid made it through on Tuesday when a 2-0 home win over second division Eibar earned them a 3-1 success.

Celta Vigo, Real Zaragoza and Valencia joined them in the last eight when they completed victories on Wednesday.

Celta drew 2-2 with Malaga -- both their goals coming from Vagner -- to claim a 3-2 aggregate win, while Zaragoza's 1-1 draw at Real Betis clinched a comfortable 4-2 success.

League leaders Valencia made it safely through with a 2-0 win away to Osasuna for a 4-2 victory overall.

Barcelona, struggling in the league, nearly saw their Cup run brought to an end despite starting well against Levante.

Iniesta quickly brought them back into the tie as he tucked in after a good run from Saviola in the fifth

minute.

Saviola made it 2-1 overall by racing on to Gerard's pass in first-half injury-time and a Ronaldo penalty, given for a foul on Saviola, gave them some breathing space midway through the second half.

Levante had threatened throughout the game, though, and Edwin Congo's run and precise shot in the 85th minute saw them pull a goal back.

Needing to score one more to clinch an away-goals win, they poured forward for the remaining five minutes of normal time plus five minutes of injury-time and only a couple of smart takes from keeper Victor Valdes kept Barcelona ahead.

In the two remaining ties on Thursday, Deportivo Coruna host the second leg against Atletico Madrid after a goalless draw in the capital last week, while Sevilla will defend a 3-1 lead at home to Villarreal.



TOO POWERFUL FOR COMFORT! Osasna's custodian Juntxo Elia is still in his saving position while a shot from Valencia's Vicente Rodriguez (L) is well past him and heading for goal at the Sadar stadium, in Pamplona on January 14.



Craig Johnston and his creation 'The Pig.'

Pig in boots!

Football

REUTERS, London

Footballer-turned-inventor Craig Johnston wants to introduce the Pig to Pele's "beautiful game".

A stalwart of the Liverpool team that dominated English football in the 1980s, Johnston went on to become a designer and entrepreneur, creating the best-selling Predator football boot.

The Australian has now been shortlisted for a design award for its follow-up, "The Pig" -- a slip-on skin for soccer boots named for its ugly appearance and the squealing sound it makes when used in the rain.

"I saw a film of Pele once -- I saw him score that goal in the 1970 World Cup and punch the air. The moment I saw that, I never wanted to be anything else," said Johnston, who scored 40 goals in his eight years as a quicksilver Anfield midfielder.

"But before that I wanted to be an architect, I wanted to design, I wanted to invent and create and make things."

Sitting in his penthouse flat in central London, the Johannesburg-born inventor demonstrated a prototype Pig, a fearsome-looking plastic skin that slips over a normal boot, covering its surface with a series of spiky 'tentacles'.

The tentacles maximised the boot's 'sweet spots', Johnston said. "The whole concept is more swerve, power and accuracy. That's given by more grip, more purchase area and better control of the ball."

Johnston is looking for backers to help him develop the Pig as a low-price product, which was his original plan when he developed the Predator for Adidas-Salomon

in 1992. Although not yet widely available, the Pig led London's Design Museum to shortlist Johnston, 43, for its 25,000-pound (\$46,200) Designer of the Year Award.

If Johnston wins the award in May it will be another feat to add to a curriculum vitae that lists winners' medals from five league championships, three league cups, one FA Cup and one European Cup.

It also includes a variety of off-pitch achievements less common among ex-footballers, including co-writing three football-inspired pop records, developing a television gameshow and even devising a system for monitoring hotel mini-bars.

"It's the stuff I love. Anything I've had an interest in, I've actually tried to reverse-engineer it -- like football."

As a child in Australia, Johnston was fascinated by technology, taking watches apart to see how they worked. He loved football but did not consider himself a natural, so he applied the same reverse-engineering to improve his game.

Johnston's dedication paid off. He joined Middlesbrough in 1975 and, after a painful apprenticeship, started more than 70 games before signing for Liverpool in 1981.

"I was the worst player in the world's best team," Johnston said of his 268-game Liverpool heyday. "I'm lucky, I've been in the right place at the right time, three or four times."

Johnston said the highpoint of his career was his first appearance in a Middlesbrough shirt -- the moment he realised he had gone from being a spectator to a part of British football.

"I felt like when a parade comes past you and you're looking up at the parade. Then when I stepped on the field, I felt like one of the

guys on the float," he said.

"I'll never forget that because it was a perspective shift, a big one, and I couldn't get over it."

His loyalties now lie with the two British teams he played for, as well as with Australia's national rugby side. But he is magnanimous about England's World Cup rugby victory last year.

"I thought it was outstanding for British sport and the best thing that's happened to Anglo-Australian relations for a long time," Johnston said. "It sets up the next 20 years."

Another Johnston enthusiasm is for managers who have adopted a high-tech approach to improving the skills of their charges.

"Gone are the days of the cloth-cap manager, looking at players like racehorses," he said.

"Someone like Alex Ferguson or Arsene Wenger, their job in life is to get incremental gain out of their squads, especially because of the closed transfer window. What these two guys get is percentages every year more out of their thoroughbreds."

This idea links in to Johnston's other pet project, a measuring system called Supaskills that allows players to test and gradually improve their skills, in much the same way that golfers do.

"I think there's a great role that I can play in football which is to help certain managers and the players themselves to look at their output and look at the science of soccer."

Despite his determination to marry art and science in football, Johnston does not see himself as a polymath.

"I'm so lucky. I can still work in football but I've had the opportunity to spin right round it. Is that being a Renaissance man or is that just being bloody lucky? I'd say bloody lucky."